

Political Communications Sub-Committee Hearing
Chair Conway Collis
USC Sacramento Center – Sacramento, CA
February 21, 2003

9:45am Meeting began with a moment of silence on behalf of the passing of former Commissioner Joe Remcho, called for by Chairman Geoff Cowan. Chairman Cowan moved to have the Commission's final report dedicated to Joe Remcho. Seconded by Commissioner Conway Collis and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Collis introduced Commissioner Keith Olberg who gave brief overview of the enacting legislation's history and the Commission's purpose.

Commissioner Collis introduced the first panel.

Panel I

- Dan Schnur, political strategist – Mr. Schnur stressed the immediacy and effectiveness of the Internet as a political organizing tool. As such, not much abuse; however, if the Internet moves onto providing organizers, campaigns and interested parties with more of a persuasive tool, than simply a motivational one, there could be greater abuse. Ultimately, Mr. Schnur recommended against any specific legislation as he believes there are already laws in place to protect voters. The marketplace should decide what's acceptable.
- Hal Dasinger, FPPC – Mr. Dasinger did not provide testimony to the Commission but presented it with a collection of sites that are employing innovative strategies and uncovering new functions for the Internet as a political tool.
- Kim Alexander, Cal Voter Foundation – The main problem of possibly regulating the political practices on the Internet is the gap between what the technology can do and what the regulators understand. Verifying the source of emails and other online communications will be the key to avoid fraud and abuse. She added that a balance must always be struck between free speech rights and protecting voters.

11:20am Commissioner Olberg excused himself for the remainder of the day, but not before the draft minutes for the December, 2002 meeting were moved by Commissioner Cowan and seconded by Commissioner Collis.

Panel II

- Bob Hansan , CapWiz – Mr. Hansan is in the business of connecting citizens with their representatives and the political world has never had a tool like the Internet for this purpose. After September 11th and the anthrax episodes, email has become a primary communication apathy to elected officials. Internet political activity is growing exponentially and voter apathy can be fought by a more engaged voting population.
- Joe Lynn, SF Ethics Commission – Mr. Lynn testified about the incredible ease and advantages of reporting campaign contributions online. The transparency afforded by

this new disclosure tool is extremely beneficial to voters. Improving the operability and interconnectedness between disparate systems is a key advancement. He cited CGS' work in this area.

12:30p Commissioner Collis opens the room to public comment. Kathy Horiuchi of Sacramento added her comments about the ephemeral nature of the Internet and the difficulty in regulating it. An actual accounting for the costs of Internet political activity is where the focus should be. That which is most expensive to provide or garners the most money for candidates should be most highly scrutinized first. Free speech issues should be paramount.

12:45pm Break for lunch

1:30 Meeting reconvened, but without both Commissioner Olberg and Commissioner Jim Rushford. An informal conversation ensued

2:30 Meeting ended, thanks to attendees, participants.

Commissioners in attendance: Geoff Cowan, Henry Carter, Jim Rushford, Conway Collis, Keith Olberg and Philip Muller.